

What is claimed is:

1. A method for updating a license period of a program; comprising:

a first determination step of determining whether a current date and time is within a license period of the program;

a step of issuing a request to an index server for transmission of an index file if a determination made by said first determination step is false;

a step of receiving the index file from said index server;

a step of issuing an authentication request to an authentication server with an address of the authentication server contained in said index file;

a step of receiving authentication information from said authentication server;

a second determination step of determining whether information indicative of success of authentication is contained in said authentication information; and

a step of updating the license period of said program if a determination made by said second determination step is true.

2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said first determination step is performed upon activation of said

program, and wherein said program becomes executable after updating said license period.

3. The method according to Claim 1, wherein address information of said authentication server contained in said index file is encrypted, further comprising the step of decrypting the encrypted address information of said authentication server.

4. The method according to Claim 1, wherein said authentication request contains user identification information to determine whether a user belongs to a group that is licensed to use said program.

5. The method according to Claim 4, further comprising the step of displaying a display screen before issuing said authentication request, the display screen requiring inputting of said user identification information and, if necessary, a password.

6. The method according to Claim 5, wherein said index file contains information about the terms of the license of the program, and wherein said display screen displays information about the terms of the license of said program in addition to the requirement of inputting said user identification information and said password.

7. A method for licensing the use of a program, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from a user;

creating or selecting an index file containing address information of a server that grants authentication regarding a license of the program to be used by the user in response to receipt of the request; and

sending said index file to the user who issued said request.

8. The method according to Claim 7, wherein said address information contained in said index file is encrypted.

9. An information processing system; comprising:

first determination means for determining whether a current date and time is within a license period of a program;

means for issuing a request to an index server for transmission of an index file if a determination made by said first determination means is false;

means for receiving the index file from said index server;

means for issuing an authentication request to an authentication server with an address of the authentication server contained in said index file;

means for receiving authentication information from said authentication server;

second determination means for determining whether information indicative of success of authentication is contained in said authentication information; and

means for updating the license period of said program if a determination made by said second determination means is true.

10. The information processing system according to Claim 9, wherein said first determination means is performed upon activation of said program, and wherein said program becomes executable after updating said license period.

11. The information processing system according to Claim 9 wherein address information of said authentication server contained in said index file is encrypted, further comprising means for decrypting the encrypted address information of said authentication server.

12. The information processing system according to Claim 9, wherein said authentication request contains user identification information to determine whether a user belongs to a group that is licensed to use said program.

13. The information processing system according to Claim

12, further comprising means for displaying a display screen requiring inputting of said user identification information and, if necessary, a password.

14. The information processing system according to Claim 13, wherein said index file contains information about the terms of the license of said program, and wherein said display screen displays information about the terms of the license of said program in addition to the requirement of inputting said user identification information and said password.

15. An information processing system, comprising:  
means for receiving a request from a user;  
means for creating or selecting an index file containing address information of a server that grants authentication regarding a license of a program to be used by said user in response to receipt of said request; and  
means for sending said index file to the user who issued said request.

16. The information processing system according to Claim 15, wherein said address information contained in said index file is encrypted.

17. A computer program product comprising a computer usable

medium having computer program logic recorded thereon for enabling a processor in a computer system to manage a license of a program, the computer program logic; comprising:

first determination means for enabling the processor to determine whether a current date and time is within a license period of the program;

means for enabling the processor to issue a request to an index server for transmission of an index file if a determination made by said first determination function is false;

means for enabling the processor to receive the index file from said index server;

means for enabling the processor to issue an authentication request to an authentication server with an address of the authentication server contained in said index file;

means for enabling the processor to receive authentication information from said authentication server;

second determination means for enabling the processor to determine whether information indicative of success of authentication is contained in said authentication information; and

means for enabling the processor to update the license period of said program if a determination made by said second determination function is true.

18. A computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer program logic recorded thereon for enabling a processor in a computer system to manage a license of a program, the computer program logic, comprising:

means for enabling the processor to receive a request from a user;

means for enabling the processor to create or select an index file containing address information of a server that grants authentication regarding a license of a program to be used by said user in response to receipt of said request; and

means for enabling the processor to send said index file to the user who issued said request.